

THE PROMOTION OF INDUSTRIAL HEALTH

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IT IS NOT the purpose of this paper to recite details in the improvements brought about by employers, in their hygienic service, but to speak of an effort which has been made to ascertain the changes that have occurred in the fundamentals of industrial medicine and hygiene, especially in so far as organized plants are concerned.

Perhaps the outstanding development since the war, when industrial hygiene first became prominent, has been the change in the relationship between employers and their physicians. In the early days employers were somewhat chary of their physicians and loath to give them very much administrative responsibility. This attitude was doubtless due to the fact that the doctor was new to industry, so far as that particular phase of his work was concerned, and relatively untried. At the present time, however, there is quite a contrast in this relationship.

FOREWORD

The Committee on the Extension of Industrial Hygiene of the Industrial Hygiene Section presented its report for 1924 as a symposium of papers by the members of the committee. Fact-finding was the phase requested to be developed by each member in the field assigned to him. This is the first of the papers of the symposium to be published. Other papers in the symposium, "The Rôle of the Federal Government in the Extension of Industrial Hygiene," by Surgeon W. S. Bean, "The Rôle of the State in the Extension of Industrial Hygiene," by E. R. Hayhurst, M.D., "Industrial Hygiene by Employer's Organizations," by Frank L. Rector, M.D., "Industrial Health Promotion in Small Plants," by Carey P. McCord, M.D., and the formal discussion of the aspect by Woods Hutchinson, M.D., will appear in succeeding issues. It is pointed out that these papers and discussions do not represent the findings of the Committee on Extension, which has as yet made no final report. The committee is continuing its work and will probably function for some time to come.—
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The modern industrial physician is a much better qualified man than the one of a few years back, and employers now have more confidence in and consequently place more responsibility on their physicians. This has resulted in a somewhat paradoxical situation, in that individual employers, generally speaking, are now themselves rarely responsible for progress in industrial medicine and hygiene. This remark is not offered in derogation of the employer. He, of course, is interested primarily in the fundamental problems of his business. He can-

not be otherwise. He is not interested in details, which he must necessarily leave to executives. So, when an employer has authorized the creation of a medical department, has selected a medical executive, and has provided for the operation of the department, he has done all that he can be expected to do. The responsibility from that time on rests with the physician.

As indicated, this is probably the greatest improvement that has appeared in industrial medicine, and it is only fair that considerable credit should be given to the employer for this change. He has recognized the fact that the industrial physician of today has become oriented in industry and is better able than ever before to adapt his medical knowledge to the needs of industry. This means that industrial medicine has found itself.

The transformation of the general practitioner or surgeon into an industrial physician has been very interesting. He came into industry as an emergency surgeon. That was his introduction, and his work in the beginning was limited to the care of injuries. However, he saw opportunities for the further application of his knowledge and skill, especially in the direction of preventive medicine and the conservation of health.

In applying the principles of preventive medicine he developed the physical examination of applicants for employment. Let it be emphasized that this was not for the purpose primarily of eliminating the physically unfit, but for the purpose of determining what kind of work the below-par employe was capable of doing, and assisting him in the continuous performance of his task. This is being accomplished with increasing success, and today the physical examination of employes is an established custom, for which much credit must be given to the physician. He has been able to show the employers the advantages of the physical examination and of the various medical activities that are tributary to it, and he has been able to convince the employes, to a considerable extent, that he is sincere in his desire to assist them. The success of the industrial physician in this direction has been largely due to the humane and sympathetic attitude which he has developed to a high degree. This accomplishment represents improvement indeed.

For the purpose of this report, the term "industrial medicine" will be construed as including all branches of the practice

of medicine as applied to industry. These will be discussed under the headings: (1) surgery, (2) preventive medicine, (3) medical treatment, (4) sanitation, and (5) occupational diseases.

SURGERY

The use of modern methods has, as we all know, greatly reduced the occurrence of infections. In the average plant of today there are practically no infections. This is one of the greatest accomplishments of industrial medicine. The employer has accepted improved surgical methods, but the credit which is given to the employer is somewhat lessened by the fact that compulsory compensation for injuries has been, in all probability, the real stimulus of his interest in this direction.

Until the time of the war, the surgeon who cared for industrial injuries rarely looked beyond the healing period of the injury. His object was to get his patient well. His attention was not directed to the fact that the patient when cured might not be physically capable of working. During the war the great number of injured soldiers and injured employes who became physically incapacitated, although cured, stimulated thought of rehabilitation. It was felt at that time, and proved, that if treatment were directed toward the replacing of the injured man in industry, a better practical result could be obtained.

The modern industrial physician has taken his lesson from the experience of the Army and Red Cross and today treats his injured patient very largely with the thought of fitting him again for employment. Certain of the states have provided departments, the sole purpose of which is to assist in the rehabilitation of the injured working man. Perhaps the employer should not be given credit for the establishment of such departments and their functioning; yet he has been wise enough to see that in the long run the acceptance of these departments and the recognition of their work will be ad-

vantageous to the workman and consequently to himself. Here again the industrial physician has measured up to his opportunities and is accomplishing, better than ever before, the satisfactory replacement of men who have been badly injured in industry.

PREVENTIVE MEDICINE

The improvements in the field of preventive medicine in industry are even more striking than those which have taken place in the field of surgery in industry. It is not necessary to detail these improvements, but rather is it important to look into the reasons for them.

Preventive medicine is, of course, recognized today as one of the important activities of the medical profession. Industrial physicians have been quick to perceive the tremendous, strategic advantage their position gives them for the application of the principles of preventive medicine. They have been quick to realize that their close personal contact with workers in the physical examination and through the treatment of injuries and complaints of various kinds places them in a very opportune position to instruct the individual in the prevention of diseases and the maintenance of health.

Until recent years the medical profession was inclined to leave the prevention of disease to departments of health, but it is obvious today, that departments of health cannot easily reach individuals, and can apply preventive medicine only to the masses. The great advantage which the industrial physician has, therefore, is quite apparent, and his acceptance of these opportunities is evidence of his great versatility, and the acceptance of employers' evidence of their confidence in him.

MEDICAL TREATMENT

There does not appear to have been any great progress in the direction of medical treatment. The average industrial physician and his employer feel that it is somewhat beyond the province of industry to take care of illnesses occurring among the

employees where more than one or at most two treatments are required. They feel that the object of medical treatment is merely to assist an employee through an emergency or to relieve him of a condition for the relief of which he ordinarily would not seek treatment. Even so, the industrial physician goes somewhat further in that he assists the workman to secure competent treatment when required. This is merely mentioned to introduce a development in industrial medicine that has caused considerable comment in the medical profession, namely, the full and complete medical treatment of employees and their families by the company physicians and nurses.

Without mentioning names, it might be said that there are several establishments which have assumed this obligation, evidently with satisfaction to the employees and employers alike. Without comment, the fact is stated that this practice on the part of the industry is regarded in some quarters of the medical profession as a daring attempt at the socialization of medicine. The medical profession is, of course, opposed to anything of that nature and it is believed sincerely opposed on the grounds that it is detrimental to the progress of medicine; that it might gradually lead the American medical profession into the same condition that exists in Germany and England today, a condition which is deemed to have stifled medical thought and activity, and consequently is a serious menace to the health and welfare of the people. It is not believed that this idea will be generally accepted. Mention is made of it only because of the fact that it is a development in industrial medicine.

SANITATION

Seemingly, the most apparent of all improvements have occurred in the field of sanitation. Whereas formerly the average industrial establishment was dirty, littered, illy lighted and poorly ventilated, the average plant of today is quite the contrary. Although the im-

petus toward improvement in this direction originated among physicians, state departments, and safety engineers, it must be said to the credit of the employer that he was quick to perceive the advantages of a well-kept, sanitary establishment. It is not necessary to specify the improvements in this field; they are known to all. It is sufficient to say that the sanitary plant is the accepted standard of today, whereas eight or ten years ago it was the exception.

OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES

Probably the most impressive achievements of industrial medicine are in the field of the occupational diseases and the recital of these achievements would be not only interesting but fascinating. So far as the employer is concerned, however, it must be said, though reluctantly, that he has not, generally speaking, been responsible for progress in this direction. The progress which has been made is due almost solely to the persistent and thorough investigations of, in the beginning, a relatively few inspired physicians, and now to a rapidly increasing number of investigators, among them the U. S. Public Health Service and certain state and municipal health departments. These official agencies have gone into this field, and through research work and painstaking efforts have gradually increased our

knowledge of the occupational diseases and are gradually forcing the acceptance of responsibility for those diseases upon the shoulders of the industry which is responsible. It might be said, however, that industry will not fully accept its responsibility for occupational diseases until compelled to compensate for disabilities resulting from them.

CONCLUSION

In closing, the writer desires and is most happy to pay this tribute to the industrial physician—he has seen his opportunities in industry, he has accepted them; he has been recognized by industry as an important element, and he is prepared to cover an even wider field. This is the outstanding improvement in industrial medicine. All other improvements are the result of this.

So far as the employer is concerned, he must be given credit for recognizing the fact that industrial medicine is an important element in industrial management, capable of great assistance in the maintenance of working forces, consequently of enhancing production.

Credit must also be given the employer for his change in attitude toward the workingman, as evidenced by his desire to assist his working forces, not only in the maintenance of their health, but in the promotion of their general welfare.